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SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL GVN TURNOUT FOR WTO ACCESSION CELEBRATION AT THE
AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

¶1. (SBU) In a marked departure from established protocol, two ministers and two vice ministers, as well as numerous other officials at the next lower level, attended a U.S.-hosted reception at the Ambassador's residence to celebrate Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Trade Minister Truong Dinh Tuyen, Minister of Justice Uong Chu Luu, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs (VFM) Le Van Bang and Vice Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyen Bich Dat, as well as senior officials from ten Ministries, the Office of the Government and the National Assembly gathered at the Residence for the event.

¶2. (SBU) Representing the Government of Vietnam (GVN), Trade Minister Tuyen offered extemporaneous, sometimes humorous, remarks. He reflected on his role in U.S.-Vietnam economic relations, beginning with the lifting of the trade embargo over ten years ago. He recounted past "struggles" but concluded that the implementation in late 2001 of the hard-won Bilateral Trade Agreement had proven to doubters that engagement with the United States was justified. He looked forward to future accomplishments and welcomed upcoming talks with USTR and the Department of Commerce on "Next Steps." Minister Tuyen alluded to current Vietnamese concerns about possible disruption of textile exports to the United States in saying that "issues remain," but otherwise kept his remarks positive throughout. The Minister thanked a long list of USG officials and agencies, from President Bush to Ambassador Marine, for their cooperation in helping Vietnam make the Bilateral Trade Agreement a success, move through the WTO accession process and ultimately secure permanent normal trade relations (PNTR). He also noted his eager anticipation of a possible early-February visit of Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Karan Bhatia.

¶3. (SBU) The celebratory and relaxed mood among the guests was laced with a hint of seriousness from the Ministry of Trade (MOT) attendees. In the words of one official, "the hard work of implementing our WTO commitments must now begin." A member of MOT's Multilateral Trade Policy Department noted that the Ministry is currently reviewing how to delineate responsibilities between his office and the Vietnamese Mission in Geneva, relaying his expectation that both would remain "very busy."

MARINE